



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Gov. Schwarzenegger Announces California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission to Assess Fire Prevention Laws**

Visiting the Lake Tahoe area a third time since the Angora Fire began, Governor Schwarzenegger today joined with Governor Jim Gibbons of Nevada to announce the California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission. The two governors signed a Memorandum of Understanding to create a panel of 17 voting members that represent each State's stake in the responsible management of lands and fire fuels within the Tahoe Basin, including representatives from affected state agencies, fire agencies and the public. They also requested the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to designate one person from the United States Forest Service to serve on the commission.

The Commission will perform a comprehensive review of the laws, policies and practices that affect the vulnerability of the Tahoe Basin to wildfires. It will also study and consider various user-friendly approaches to reducing the threat of wildfires while protecting the environment and submit a report and recommendations to the two governors by March 21, 2008.

It is crucial that we all work together to prevent something like the Angora Fire from happening again and also make sure people have the right fire protection tools to protect their property, said Governor Schwarzenegger. With this action we are taking today I know California and Nevada will rise to the occasion and make sure the Lake Tahoe Basin remains as safe as it is beautiful.

The Commission will disband 60 days after delivering its report and recommendations.

To help the victims recover, Governor Schwarzenegger has been engaged in the response efforts since the Angora Fire began on June 24, 2007.

On July 4, 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger sent a letter to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) requesting that El Dorado County be declared a disaster area in order to provide SBA Disaster Loan Program assistance to Angora Fire victims. The request was granted and will qualify victims of the Angora Fire for low income loans of up to \$200,000 for homeowners to repair or replace their damaged or destroyed primary residence. Also, homeowners and renters are eligible for up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property. Businesses of any size and private non-profit organizations may borrow up to \$1.5 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets. The loans are available for homeowners, renters and business owners whose property was damaged or destroyed in the fire.

As a result of this disaster, El Dorado County proclaimed a local emergency June 24, 2007, and subsequently requested state and federal assistance by a separate proclamation issued June 25, 2007. In response to El Dorado County's request, a proclamation for a State of Emergency was issued on June 25, 2007. Governor Schwarzenegger also toured the fire zone to see first hand the devastation that was caused. The also Governor announced the establishment of a Local Assistance Center to help provide state and local services to assist victims displaced by the wildfire, suffering property loss and economic and other damages.

Governor Schwarzenegger also issued two executive orders to help victims of the wildfire recover. On June 27, 2007, he issued an executive order to assist individuals that suffered losses by waiving fees for replacing state documents lost in the fire including vehicle registrations, drivers' licenses and birth certificates. He issued another executive order on July 2, 2007 to help victims clean up and rebuild as quickly as possible by streamlining, and in some cases suspending, certain state rules regarding the removal and disposal of both hazardous and non-hazardous debris as well as dead and dying trees.

The Angora Fire began on June 24, 2007 in the North Upper Truckee area in South Lake Tahoe, California and was fully contained on July 2, 2007. The fire burned a total of 3,100 acres and destroyed 254 homes.

The full text of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Governors Schwarzenegger and Gibbons is below:

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## **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

### **Between The State of California And The State of Nevada**

**WHEREAS** on June 24, 2007, the Angora Fire began in the North Upper Truckee area in South Lake Tahoe, California. The fire burned out of control, threatening hundreds of residences and commercial structures, and resulted in thousands of evacuations. A total of 3,100 acres were burned and 254 homes were destroyed by this fire.

**WHEREAS** El Dorado County proclaimed a local emergency June 24, 2007, and subsequently requested state and federal assistance by a separate proclamation issued the next day. In response to El Dorado County's request, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed a State of Emergency for this event on June 25, 2007. The Angora Fire was fully contained on July 2, 2007.

**WHEREAS** the Angora Fire has underscored the need for a comprehensive review of fire prevention and fuel management practices in the Lake Tahoe Basin, and on July 5, 2007, Nevada Governor Jim Gibbons publicly invited California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to join him in establishing a joint fire commission to review fuels management of forests in the Tahoe Basin as well as the policies and procedures of the various agencies that govern fuels management within the Basin.

**WHEREAS** the States of California and Nevada are committed to reducing the threat of wildfires while preserving the unique and treasured environment of the Tahoe region.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, California and Nevada hereby agree as follows:

1. The California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission (Commission) is hereby created.
2. Voting members of the Commission:

1. The Governors of California and Nevada shall each appoint eight voting members within the Tahoe Basin, including, but not limited to, representatives from affected state agencies, fire agencies, and the public.
2. The Governors of California and Nevada hereby request that the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture designate one person from the United States Forest Service to serve as a voting member of the Commission.
3. 3. Non-voting members of the Commission:
  1. The Governors of California and Nevada may each appoint a maximum of three non-voting ex officio members to ensure that Tahoe Basin issues, as well as respective State issues, are represented.
4. Commission members shall serve without compensation, but may receive reimbursement of expenses by their respective States. Members shall serve at the pleasure of their respective appointing authorities.
5. The Governor of California and the Governor of Nevada shall each designate one member from their respective appointees to serve as co-chair of the Commission.
6. California and Nevada will provide resources and staffing to the Commission on a substantially equal basis.
7. The Commission shall perform a comprehensive review of the laws, policies, and practices that affect the vulnerability of the Tahoe Basin to wildfires and/or that pertain to fire prevention and fuel management in the Basin. The Commission shall study and consider various approaches to reducing identified vulnerabilities, and shall submit findings and recommendations to the Governors of California and Nevada by March 21, 2008. These findings and recommendations shall:
  1. Identify the wildfire suppression and fuel management practices that are currently used in the Tahoe Basin, and evaluate the effectiveness of those practices;
  2. Recommend improvements and changes that will reduce the Tahoe Basin's wildfire vulnerability while protecting the environment; and
  3. Recommend ways to effectively educate homeowners and other members of the public on appropriate fuel-reduction and fire-protection measures that they can take.
8. The Commission shall meet as appropriate to fulfill its functions, and shall comply with the open meetings laws of both California and Nevada. In the event of a conflict between these laws, the Commission shall comply with the law that provides the greater right of public access.
9. The Commission may create committees to carry out its mission. Each committee may be comprised of Commission members (including ex officio members) and a maximum of three individuals who are not members of the Commission.
10. The Commission shall disband 60 days after delivering its findings and recommendations.
11. This Memorandum of Understanding is not intended to be legally binding or to impose legal obligations on California or Nevada and will have no legal effect. Neither California nor Nevada is responsible for the actions of third parties or associates who may be involved in activities outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding.

Signed this 25th day of July 2007.